

REMARKS

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 3-7, and 9-19 are pending in this application, with Claims 1, 7, 13, 16 and 19 being independent. Claims 2 and 8 have been canceled without prejudice.

Claims 1, 7, 11, 13, 16 and 19 have been amended. Applicant submits that support for the amendments can be found in the original disclosure at least, for example, in Fig. 6 and the description at page 18, line 21 through page 19, line 11. Therefore, Applicant submits that no new matter has been added.

Claims 3-6, 9-12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 were objected to because of minor informalities. Those claims have been amended in view of the Examiner's comments, and withdrawal of the objections is requested.

Claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. That claim has been amended to recite that the program is stored in a computer-readable storage medium. Applicant submits that this claim is directed to statutory subject matter, and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5-8, 11-14, 16, 17 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,021,496 (Dutcher). Claims 3, 4, 9, 10, 15 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dutcher, and in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/00874894 (Foley). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections for the reasons discussed below.

As recited in independent Claim 1, the present invention is directed to an authentication apparatus having a plurality of authentication mechanisms. A problem can occur in such an apparatus when switching between authentication mechanisms, for example, from authentication mechanism 1 to authentication mechanism 2. In particular, if authentication mechanism 1 is invalidated and the authentication in the authentication mechanism 2 does not succeed, there is no valid authentication mechanism that may authenticate the user, and thus the user cannot utilize the apparatus. In such a case, it may be necessary to restart the whole authentication system including revalidating the authentication mechanism 1, or to ask a system manager of the authentication mechanism 2 to set up the mechanism, which are both costly alternatives.

In order to avoid the situation mentioned above, the present invention recited in Claim 1 includes, *inter alia*, the features of a verification unit adapted to verify that authentication of an object of authentication in a second authentication mechanism succeeds, and an invalidation unit adapted to invalidate a first authentication mechanism if it has been verified by the verification unit that the authentication of the object of authentication in the second authentication mechanism succeeds. Due to these features, the invention recited in Claim 1 invalidates the first authentication mechanism that has been used only if the authentication in the new (i.e., second) authentication mechanism succeeds, which serves to prevent a situation from occurring where there is no authentication mechanism that may authenticate the user, that is, a situation where the user is “locked out” from the authentication mechanism (authentication system).

Applicant submits that the cited art fails to disclose or suggest at least the above-mentioned features of Claim 1. In contrast to the invention of Claim 1, Dutcher discloses a method that allows a user to select a domain among a plurality of domains, and to login to the selected domain. However, Dutcher does not describe nor suggest anything regarding switching an authentication mechanism for use as described above. In addition, Dutcher does not aim to avoid being locked out from the authentication mechanism. The other cited art also fails to disclose or suggest at least these features, and therefore the other art fails to remedy the deficiencies of Dutcher.

The invention of independent Claim 7 is an authentication method having method steps generally corresponding to the features recited in Claim 1, and Claim 7 is believed patentable for reasons similar to Claim 1.

The invention of independent Claim 13 includes, *inter alia*, the features of a verification step of verifying that authentication of an object of authentication in a second system has succeeded at a second authentication step, and a control step that performs control to switch the object of authentication from management under a first system to management under a second system, on the condition that the authentication of the object of authentication at a second authentication step has been verified. Independent Claims 16 and 19 are directed to an apparatus and a program that recite similar features. Those claims are believed patentable over the cited art for reasons similar to Claim 1.

The dependent claims are believed to be patentable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims, as well as for the additional features they recite.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the outstanding objection and rejections, and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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